

Rotary Club of Blaby
(RIBI Club No1249)
The
First Forty Years



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Be a gift to the world

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During 1975 a number of Rotarians in the old BOW club (Rotary Club of Blaby, Oadby and Wigston), who all lived or worked in Wigston proposed that a separate club for Wigston should be formed. After consultation with the then District 107, it was agreed that the Blaby, Oadby and Wigston Club should indeed become three. The new Oadby club would retain the original charter and foster the new Rotary Club of Wigston, whilst the Rotary Club of Lutterworth would foster the new Rotary Club of Blaby. District Extension Officer, PDG Ron Watson, of the Rotary Club of Bedford was given the responsibility of bringing this to a reality, and the Rotary Club of Lutterworth gave the task of assisting in the creation of the Rotary Club of Blaby to Rtn. Ron Eglin, who later became the Club's first Honorary Member in recognition of the efforts he had put in during its formation.

So it was that District Extension officer, Ron, came knocking at the door of John Courtney, who was subsequently to become the new club's Founder President. Unlike the new Wigston Club, the infant Blaby Club were not the recipients of an influx of former BOW club members, although the creation of the new club allowed medical practitioner, Andrew St John, to join whilst his senior partner at the time, Geoffrey Taylor, remained with Oadby, as it did Pharmacist, Peter Halford, whilst his partner at the Blaby shop, Tony Dyer, remained with Oadby. Although not joining at the time of the club's founding, Rtn. David Ripley, with a business in Wigston and a home in Frolesworth, left the Oadby Club and became part of the new Blaby Club during its early years, but at the time of its founding the Blaby Club members were all new and fresh to Rotary

So it was in the autumn of 1975, after a series of weekly meetings not always in the same place, the number of prospective members gradually increased until the following members came together on 9th October for the Inaugural Meeting of the Interim club, held jointly with the Inaugural Meeting of the Interim Wigston Club at the County Rooms in Hotel Street in the city under the chairmanship of District Governor Jim Jackson of the Huntingdon Club. They thus became part of the Rotary family.



Formation Members

Name	Classification
Michael Beesley	Agricultural Contracting
Bruce Bishop	Dentistry
Gerald Brodie	Motor Vehicle Retailing
Roy Brown	Ophthalmology
Russ Clark	Banking – Local
John Courtney	Quantity Surveying
Patrick Crowther-Green	Religion, Anglican
Malcolm Darlaston	Oil Engine Distributing
David Etheridge	Accounting Service
Peter Halford	Pharmacy
Harold Hall	Aircraft Engine Repair
Joseph Hall	District. Council Estate Management
David Hewitt	Medical Equipment Manufacture
Peter Jones	Insurance, general
Tom King	Education Secondary
Geoff Kingston	Estate Agency
Arthur Midgaff	Motor Vehicle Repairs
Arthur Mortimer	Adhesives Manufacture
Reg Nowell	District Council Finance
Alan Pearce	Insurance, General Brokering
David Pollard	Electric Power Plant
Frederick Rayer	Education, Primary
Andrew St John	Gen. Medical Practice
William Tallis	Arable Farming
Ronald Toye	Nuclear Power Equipment
John Vincent	Building Societies
Robert Wills	Aircraft Access. Manufacture

They continued to meet over the following four months until the charter of the club in March 1976, during which time Messrs Bishop, Etheridge, King, Mortimer and Wills decided the joys of Rotary were not for them. The remaining 22 members with the addition of new member, John Jackson, whose classification was Parish Council Admin, set off on the Rotary Journey that was to be the Blaby Club.

From the beginning the Blaby Club looked to involve itself in, and offer support to, the various communities covered by the area of the Blaby District of Leicestershire. Early support came in the form of the acquisition of two motorised wheelchair scooters which were loaned out to deserving cases on extended loan. Although a relatively common sight in this 21st Century, in the 70's they were very unusual, and were enormously appreciated by those whom they assisted. These were followed by a special bed, which could be adjusted into a great variety of positions — again relatively common in this 21st Century, but very rare at that time. This was donated on long-term loan to a special patient in Whetstone. Two computers — something very new in the 70's were donated to the Health Service, one of which to assist with the diagnosis of leukaemia was to the Haematology Unit of the Leicester Royal Infirmary led by Consultant, Dr Mike Hutchinson who had also received months earlier a cheque from the club to go towards the purchase of a blood cell separator. Heart Monitoring Equipment was provided for the then Groby Road (Now Glenfield) Hospital and Later a special bath was

provided for the Blaby Hospital for its geriatric care. This £2000 piece of equipment not only had a door in the side but hydraulically tilted to enable better access for patients.

When a new Drop-In Centre for the Elderly in Blaby was needed the club raised £1000 towards the estimated £12,000 cost. The Blaby District Council had grant-aided 50% of the cost and the Parish Council had raised a substantial



sum; thus the Club's donation went a long way to providing the balance. Members took on the task of decorating this Drop-In Centre for Christmas each year in time for the Senior Citizens Christmas Party, and the work done by the late Rtn. Harold Hall in supporting this centre was exceptional. not only in maintenance, but also in driving the mini-bus to collect the old folk for meetings and to deliver them home again.

Another regular feature for Senior Citizens has been the Club's Annual Band Concert. This has been a regular part of the Club's Programme for more than twenty years. For many years this concert was held at Brockington College in Enderby, when almost 200 elderly members of the community from



Countesthorpe to Frolesworth, from Narborough to Glen Parva were brought to the College for a free concert. Refreshments were provided and an enjoyable evening was had by all. This concert continues to this day but is now held in the Village Hall in Countesthorpe.

Harold Hall, the Club's fifth President, established during his year of office a recorded Talking Newspaper for the Blind. The club raised the money for the purchase of 50 small tape-recorders which were provided for the recipients, and he built a team of volunteers, including club members, who read and recorded articles from the local newspapers and distributed the recorded tapes to the blind and partially sighted on a very regular basis throughout the year. This ran for a period of more than thirty years and was highly valued by all who received it. The digital age in recent years took over and sadly the Blaby Talking Newspaper passed into history.

After many short term stays at different local hostelrys the club finally settled into a more permanent home in the Hong Kong Chinese Restaurant in Blaby. This closed its doors to other patrons on a Tuesday lunchtime and offered an

excellent selection of Chinese and English meals at a very competitive price. The Blaby Club became a popular place for Rotarians to make up their attendance requirements which were more strictly observed in those days. The Club had a steady stream of visitors and it was unusual not to have a Rotary guest at the Blaby Table. The Club stayed at the Hong Kong Restaurant until 1996, when the venue itself was bought out by an Indian Restaurant who were not interested in opening at lunch times. At this point the Blaby Club moved to hold its regular meetings at the Cosby Golf Club.

Apart from jumble sales, an early fundraiser which was extremely popular throughout the local area was the Annual Barn Dance. This took place at the farm of founder member Bill Tallis. Club members would assist in cleaning and emptying his large barn on the farm and kitting it out for a real genuine traditional Barn Dance.



Food was put on provided by Patricia Screaton and Inner Wheel and a whole range of games to play from skittles to Whack-a-Rat together with the traditional Country Dancing to a live Country Dance Band. In the early days

straw bales were used for seats and tables with the inevitable great atmosphere. However, even then the influence of the Health and Safety Brigade came in and the fire service insisted that if the Club continued to use straw bales they would have to be sprayed with fire-retardant chemicals, making them totally unfit to be reused for cattle. Straw therefore had to give way to a host of imported tables and chairs – not quite the same rural appeal. However, the idea of a major single fund-raising event in the year had been established, and was to prove the pattern for the future. The Club owed a great debt to Bill and Stella Tallis for the amount of work and inconvenience to the life of their farm during what could be a three week period lasting several years. The inception of the Annual Golf Tournament in 1984 brought an alternative form of income and relieved the pressure on the Tallis household.



The Annual Golf Tournament at Cosby Golf Club brought a new chapter to the history of the Blaby Club. It was the beginning of a relationship between the Golf Club and the Rotary Club that has lasted more than thirty years.

The Golf Club was the site of a tree-

planting project in the year of the Presidency of the late Bill James, 1990-91, and most of the trees between the sixth and seventh holes became a permanent witness to those efforts. Indeed, the sixth hole was named the "Rotary" hole when Cosby G.C. decided to name each of its holes.



This tournament has run for over 30 years and raised almost £100,000 for local and international Rotary Charities. The club was later to move its meeting venue to Cosby GC when a new room had been built as a private meeting room for small functions to commemorate the centenary of the Golf Club. It has remained there for twenty years until recent catering problems within the Golf Club has meant a rethink.

Early in the Club's life the ladies of the Blaby Rotarians under the leadership of Julia Courtney, wife of Founder President, John, created in May 1979 the Inner Wheel Club of Blaby, which had its inaugural charter later that year in November, and has been an active partner and strong supporter of the Rotary Club ever since. Indeed seven of the founder members of the Inner Wheel Club, Valerie Beesley, Sylvia Brown, Patricia Ripley, Patricia Screaton, Barbara Southeran, Heather St John and Stella

Tallis are still active members to this day. Another member of the Inner Wheel Club of Blaby, Elsbeth James, went on to become District Chairman of Inner Wheel District 7, and indeed to become the first Lady Rotarian in the Blaby Club after the death of her husband the late Bill James and of course after the historic rule change for Rotary when it became a truly dual-gender organisation

Then the sixth Rotary President Roy Brown added to the Blaby Rotary Family by forming a Rotaract Club of Blaby, and thus involving young people of the area in the idea of Service. They, like the ladies, were an active asset in community projects and, of course, tin-rattling at Christmas to raise funds for further community support. They naturally had their own lively social programme and such events as the "Splosh 'n' Nosh" by the swimming pool of the Holiday Inn remain in many memories of their spontaneous fun. Early member Tim Brown met his wife to be, Lyn, as part of the club. They now have a successful cheese retailing business in Melton Mowbray and he has gone on to become a Rotarian in the Lutterworth Wycliffe Club. Another active Rotaracter of the Blaby Club was one Andy Gilbert, who went on to become District Rotaract chairman and later to take National Office in Rotaract Britain and Ireland. The Club was supported at their meetings over the years by Rotarians Roy Brown, Bill James, David Clarke and Tom Hunt, but sadly suffered a decline in numbers towards the end of the century, and closed in 1998. The Club retained the Charter and tried to restart it but efforts proved in vain.

Right from the beginning the Club has had an active social programme bringing its members together to enjoy themselves not just at the regular meeting and in service projects but in events purely for fun and enjoyment. Each year members compete in a different sport, game or activity for the Founders' Trophy. This has involved such different games as the regular "pub-type" games of darts, dominoes, or table tennis, snooker, indoor bowls to the more energetic outdoor pursuits of archery, clay pigeon shooting, different forms of golf, French boules and even dump-truck driving.



Pictured is Rtn. Howard King in full concentration during the "Boules" event. These events always involved the Inner Wheel and were completed with the appropriate food and refreshment.

The Club entered a team in the Blaby Quiz Competition regularly and were winners on a number of occasions.

Every year Blaby members and their better halves have taken part in the "Minor Sports" events with and against other clubs in the District. Usually they have generously lost to their visitors, but one year they reached the District Finals

and a coach was hired for team and supporters, who travelled in hope and anticipation, but returned sadly as runners-up. This annual social event was originally devised and organised for the District by Blaby's own Harold Hall who joined the District Club Service Committee in 1982. He held various offices within District 107, including that of Vice-Chairman of Group 2 of the District in between 1988-89 and 1990-91, (This was the office in RIBI that led to the creation in RI of Assistant Governors in 1997-98) and District Editor of District 1070 News and Events. He also became the District's photographer and many of the photographs in this history are his work.

Harold was followed on to District involvement by Terry Watts, who had joined the Club during 1982-83. He had become involved with the club through their support of the area Youth Opportunities Programme run by Terry and his staff at local Brockington College. The YOP Scheme needed transport for their youngsters and the club responded to this local need by the provision of a van which was fitted out by Rtn. Mick Beesley and his team of volunteers. Terry came to the Club to talk about such Community opportunities within the Blaby area and was immediately recruited as a member of the Club. Terry, a golfer, was Captain of the Cosby Golf Club in 1985 and was of course responsible for the starting of the Annual Golf Tournament at Cosby GC mentioned earlier. He went on to be Club President in 1989 and involved in District Service the following year joining the International Committee. He

subsequently served as District Asst Treasurer, and on Club Service and Communications Committees before becoming Assistant Governor from 1999-2001 and District Governor in 2002-03. As Chair of the District Foundation Committee from 2004-07 he brought yet another Blaby member into District Service in Rtn. Eddy Brew becoming his Grants Sub-Committee Chairman from 2005.

Terry naturally served on the RIBI National Council during his year of office as Governor for 1070, but then continued as a member of the RIBI Communications Committee for a further year and later as Rotary International Zone 18 Co-ordinator for Literacy Projects, organising, together with PDG John Bendall of the Rotary Club of Nottingham, the RI Zone 17 Co-ordinator, the first National RIBI Conference on Literacy. Terry and John were equally joint group leaders on the subject at the Rotary International Institute in Hamburg.

Having built within the Club a mood of involvement in the wider scheme of Rotary, it was natural that there would be a positive response in 1987-88 to a call to support the new Initiative to remove Polio from the world. A sponsored walk



was selected as the best fund-raising event. Rtns. David Clarke, Bill James and Mike Hill became the organising trio with the support of the whole club.



They enlisted the support of Blaby MP, Nigel Lawson and held a launch event in late December. Members then visited community groups, schools and other organisations to drum up support before the event itself, which took place on Sunday 10th April. The Club had a target of raising £3,000, but vastly exceeded that, the final total being close to £12,000 or £400 per capita — a magnificent effort.

The Club has had a permanent commitment to the cause of Polio Eradication despite the length of time the programme has taken and its enormous costs. Rotary set off in 1988 with expectations of a fast solution to the problem, but reality proved otherwise. Nevertheless, the club has continued to promote the cause and to supply funds. In 2005 it took an even more practical term, when PDG Terry Watts, in his capacity as District Foundation Chair led the first District Group from 1070, and indeed from RIBI, to take part in a National Immunisation Day in India. The 20 Rotarians from 1070 worked with

other Rotarians from France, Russia, the US, Belgium and the Far East together with local Indian Rotarians to immunise over 2,000 children under the age of five in the small industrial town of Firozabad (a town half the size of Loughborough with a population twice as large as Leicester) during a single weekend — in Terry's words, "an unforgettable experience"

Terry is seen here administering the drops to a young patient.



During the trip they also found time to visit the extraordinary work of the Jaipur Limb Centre, where quality artificial limbs were fitted to patients who merely arrived at the door completely free of charge to the patient and at a cost of less than 30 US dollars — a centre which has also received support from the Blaby Club.

PDG Terry is certainly not the only member of the club to have given Rotary Service overseas. Rtns. Mike Hill, David Clarke and Mick Beesley with club member Brian Pollard and his wife Mary carried out an extensive programme of humanitarian aid for Romania. Brian and Mary had discovered the plight of the hospital in Clug-Napoca, Romania,



desperate for supplies to serve their 65,000 population. Mike and Mick together with Brian and Mary took two large box vans of aid to Clug. A second larger consignment was later taken out by Brian and Mary, together with Mike and Mick and David with members of the Blaby Meridian club and another lorry load from Rotary Club of Bourne in the convoy. Mike, David, Brian and Mary were even to make a third trip with yet more supplies



This magnificent project was only the first to show the practical commitment of Blaby Rotarians to International Aid. Rtns. David Ripley and Eddy Brew, made aware of the need for clean water in Uganda went on a fact-finding trip to Lubwe, where water wells were desperately needed. They made contact with the nearest Rotary club to Lubwe

(more than an hour's hard drive away) who were willing to be the African end of the Project, they made first hand inspection of the location and the feasibility of the Project and on their return the Club carried through its first Foundation Grant Aided Project to dig those wells. The Project was approved by the District Foundation Committee and equally by the RI International Foundation team in Chicago. The club raised the necessary £5,000 for the project which was doubled by District 1070 and doubled again by RI Foundation. The Project was successfully carried through, being monitored at the Blaby end by Eddy Brew. The Lubwe area gained 20 much needed wells providing essential life-saving water for the local population.

Yet even that is not the end, for the Club is now entering into another Foundation grant-aided project for a school in Olbak, Tanzania. This came to light through relatively new member Rtn. Louise Richardson, who had visited the area and become aware of the needs of the school. She made a return trip to Olbak in 2015 to further discover the needs and the Olbak School is now the subject of the latest Blaby Foundation Relief Project in Africa. Again the clubs £4000 has been doubled and redoubled to make a really worthwhile project.

Relief Boxes have become a feature of the Club's Programme each year. In the early days this was for an emergency box, which provided much-needed emergency tools and equipment for disaster areas. These were later replaced by Aqua Boxes, which provided the crucial addition of a container and tablets

for the provision of clean water together with the pieces of individual equipment so useful after a disaster. Rtn. Alan Pulford, who had joined the Club from the Soar Valley R.C., became the undisputed king of the Aquabox in District 1070. He distributed no less than 577 of these boxes to schools and other organisations to fill, in return for a talk on his experiences in India and his meeting with Mother Teresa. His inspired programme meant filled Aquaboxes from Blaby were regularly being sent to the Aquabox headquarters in Derbyshire, from where they were sent to various disaster areas in the world. More recently the Club have been providing Shelter Boxes, where aid is needed. Shelter Boxes provide a tent and sufficient equipment, together with water purification to keep a family for six weeks or more.

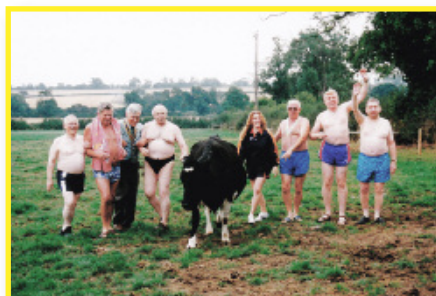
A somewhat larger box was also the subject of Blaby's contribution to Disaster Relief. This time the box took the form of caravans to provide accommodation for victims of the Turkish Earthquake disaster. A Japanese Rotarian Shipping owner offered to transport such caravans to Turkey in vessels which had brought parts for Japanese Cars in the North East of England. The Club responded to this relief request, found an old caravan, restored it to roadworthiness with the assistance of member Mark Randell, and towed it to Southampton through the efforts of Alan Pulford and Terry Watts. The rows of caravans all bearing large Rotary logos in Southampton docks awaiting loading on to the Japanese ship was a clear demonstration of the power

of Rotary to respond to a need.



The collection of old spectacles for re-use in the third world is yet another example of Blaby's commitment to aid the less fortunate. Initially begun by the late Rtn. Alan Pulford and now continued by Rtn. Eddy Brew, the collection long since passed the 50,000 pairs mark. Through Vision Aid their frames are strengthened and their lenses polished; they are then sorted into the various prescriptions before sending to the third world.

Another international project which received the Blaby Club's attention was the Send-a-Cow project, which is very much the initiative of local farmers Sandra and Anthony Herbert. Six members of the Club agreed in 2001 to take on a diet and exercise programme to lose weight in a sponsored slim. The attached notorious photograph of



Messrs Ron Miles, Robert Banner, Harold Hall, Terry Watts, Gerald Rimmington and David Robinson clad in very little with fitness instructor, Kirsty Johnson in the field at the Herbert's Whetstone Pastures Farm certainly attracted the sponsorship and enough cash was raised to send four cows to Uganda.

All these programmes were associated with or supported by the Club's commitment to the Rotary Foundation, not just by its annual contributions to the fund, but in another more unusual way in the shape of Rotary Retail 1070. The



District 107 Shop as it was first called was run by Rtn. Ron Gilbert of the Rotary Club of Wigston. This was originally conceived as a service to the Rotary Clubs of the District to obtain locally things like Rotary Badges, leaflets etc. Terry Watts, together with his Assistants, Alan Pulford and Ron Miles took over this service for Clubs in D1070, and by negotiating discounts from Official Rotary Suppliers were able to produce a substantial income for the Rotary Foundation each year. They set up the shop at each District Council Meeting, District Assembly and importantly District Conference. They enlarged the scope of the shop to include clothing and giftware

and proudly claimed that there was nothing produced by official Rotary suppliers as recognised and licensed by RI, that could not be obtained through Rotary Retail 1070 at no extra cost and with considerably less inconvenience. When Terry became Asst. Governor in 1998-99, the workload was unsustainable and Rotary Retail 1070 was handed over from Blaby to the Rotary club of Kettering Huxloe.

Life Education came to Leicestershire in 1993 and was immediately embraced by the Club. John Croot who had come to Leicestershire from Leeds in 1991 joining the Club in that year, became enthused and joined the newly forming Charitable Trust for Life Education, serving on that Board as Managing Secretary and Line Manager to the Educators until retiring from the onerous task in 2001. Very many children in the Blaby area, and indeed the whole of the city and county, will have recognised Harold the giraffe mascot of the Life Education Programme.



Harold and his friends visited over 100 schools each year to show children how important it was to keep healthy, confident and not endanger their well-being by misuse of harmful substances. The Blaby Club took a full part in raising the money for the caravan containing the educators to visit schools, and even now finances local schools to ensure the visit takes place.

Yet another service to schools was begun by Terry Watts, in association with Inspector Viv Brenchley of the Leicestershire Police and the County Education Department. Together with the Rotarians of Blaby and other local clubs including Hinckley, a project called Safety Squad was set up for two weeks at the end of the summer term at Mallory Park, the motor racing circuit near Earl Shilton in Leics. It was set up to make Year 6 pupils more aware of the dangers that were permanently around them and how to avoid the risks involved. Year 6 children were chosen as that is the year during which children reach the age where criminal responsibility begins. A large marquee was the centre point, where the children gathered after being transported there from their schools, accompanied of course by their teachers. Around this large marquee were a series of smaller tents each featuring a particular danger or risk, each sponsored by a different organisation — the Police, the Severn Trent Water Authority, the Electricity Company, the East Midlands Gas Board, the Fire Service, the Railway Police all took part creating a particular scenario. Rotarians were used in these Scenarios and as guides for the children in small groups around the scenarios.

Children were provided with Question sheets for each scenario and the opportunity was then clear for follow-up back at school. The Local Education authority, however, unfortunately decided that the Rotary volunteers' contribution could be taken on by sixth-formers from different schools and thus Rotary's involvement ceased after the first year. The scheme, however, continued with Severn Trent hosting it at their premises near Cropston reservoir. Later the opportunity arose for it to have a permanent 52 weeks of the year indoor base on Frog Island in the City, financed by Everards Brewery. First class scenarios were built indoors and children could be brought throughout the year, thus widening the opportunity. It took on the new name of Warning Zone and thrives to this day.



Blaby Rotary is now again involved with three of its members, Elsbeth James, Jim Diaper and Hilary Painter, on the team of volunteers who escort the children through the scenarios. Interestingly Hilary had been one of the teachers from the Narborough Primary School who had taken part in the original Safety Squad.

In 1991-92 Terry Watts and David Clarke, President for that year took on the task of adding to the Rotary Family in the area by creating a new Club.

A significant number of Cosby Golf Club members had indicated their interest in Rotary, but were unable to attend a lunchtime Club. The Blaby Club primarily looked to this club to be based in the Glenfield area of the Blaby District, but after members had been recruited through the Meridian Industrial Park by David, the members showed a preference to meet in Narborough. They moved to an inaugural Formation in the late Spring with the assistance of the then District 1070 Extension Officer, David Rollett, and were chartered in the late summer by District Governor Barry Hodgkinson of the Rotary Club of Boston. By this time Ron Miles had taken



swim as many lengths of the pool as they wished during that time. Teams came from schools and community groups, even from our own members — who



over as President of the Blaby Club. The first President of the new Blaby Meridian Rotary Club was Bert Ross, an electrical contractor from Glen Parva.

The new Rotary Club was to work closely on many activities with its older creator, not the least of which being the Annual Swimathon Fund Raiser at the Wigston Swimming Pool. Teams of sponsored swimmers would have 55 minutes to



could forget the team of Mr Blabbies and their efforts ! These would be carefully checked by the Rotary volunteers from both Clubs who would record the resultant efforts. Teams were allowed to fund raise for their own causes by retaining a proportion of the sponsorship money obtained before passing the rest to the clubs concerned. The team gaining the most sponsorship and swimming the most lengths were awarded a prize and all competitors received a certificate of performance.

Not IN the water hopefully, but ON the water leads the story to Sailability, a wonderful project for the disabled to give them the freedom of the able-



bodied. Sailability takes place on various lakes and reservoirs around the district, at Grafham Water, at Wanlip in Leicester, but principally at Rutland Water. The club has provided two boats for use by the project. These are specially designed boats for use by disabled sailors. Volunteers work with the disabled sailors each time, usually on a Thursday courtesy of the Rutland Water Sailing Club. Two members of the Blaby Club



regularly assist in this way, Hilary Painter and Andrew St John, a very satisfying voluntary exercise.

The club has also co-operated with the Rotary Club of Market Bosworth in watery activity — In this case in two years of a raft race. Competitors would need to construct their rafts and then propel them around a prepared course in a race against other rafts. Needless to

say not all rafts lived up expectations and survived to a finish. With Club now dining for six months at Stanton Lakes, are we now heading for another piece of watery history ?

In 2002-03, RIBI President Tony de St Dalmas launched a project to offer free blood pressure testing through the services of Rotary Clubs in RIBI. Clubs would set up a caravan or something



similar in a public place, staff it with appropriately qualified medical personnel and offer free blood pressure testing to members of the public. The Blaby Club initially did this in the square in Blaby and then in subsequent years joined with the Blaby Meridian club to have a caravan outside the ASDA store in Braunstone. Terry Watts in his capacity as DG at the time visited twelve such sites throughout the District to, as it were, rally



the troops. He and his driver would inevitably have their blood pressures taken to encourage public participation and, interestingly, his went down steadily through the day whilst his driver's went up! More interesting, however, was the fact that every year this event took place one member of the public was discovered with a blood pressure apparently too high and was referred on to their GP.

Typical of the "hands-on" approach of the Blaby Club was the restoration of Thomas the Tank engine. Over time weather and wear and tear had taken their toll on the Thomas the Tank Engine at the Sketchley Hill Menphys Nursery in Burbage.



Member Mark Randell made the President of the day, Robert Banner, aware of this and it was decided that it was a worthy project for the club to undertake. Mark who ran a garage took along his car transporter, and with the assistance of members of the Club collected Thomas and his coach and took them for safe keeping to a barn on Rtn. Bill Tallis's farm. About 20 of the Club members spent weekends and other time restoring and repainting the engine and coach until it looked as good as new. Mark then returned Thomas and his

coach on his car transporter to the nursery school where Rtn. Robert Porter made the perfect Fat Controller in top hat and tails together with Club members to the delight of the children and staff.

"Toys on the Table" is another example of the Club's response and rescue. "Toys on the Table" seeks to provide toys or gifts at Christmas for children who might otherwise not receive anything. This had been a very successful Leicester and Leicestershire Institution started by St Martin's Round Table in Leicester (hence the name). It grew too large for a declining Round Table Club. They handed it to Voluntary Action Leicester to run, which they did for a number of years. Terry Watts in his other role as secretary of the Leicestershire & Rutland Golf Captains had been supporting the project with a Golf Captains Golf Tournament at the beginning of December each year, producing a hundred or so toys for distribution. In 2003, although he had collected the usual toys, he discovered that Voluntary Action Leicester had closed the project down. With the help of Radio Leicester needy children were found for those toys. Rtn. John Aldridge of the Leicester club, and MD of the Leicester Mercury, which had always strongly supported "Toys on the Table", offered his assistance and suggested that Terry might wish to rescue this Leicestershire Institution. This duly happened and with the assistance of the Club and the Golf Captains phoenix rose from the ashes. The new "Toys on the Table" was formed





as a properly Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. It grew from strength to strength thanks to the Rotary and Golf Captain volunteers and now, eleven years later with its own premises thanks to the generosity of the Leicester City Council, looks after almost 4,000 children with some 8,000 toys each year. All the children are referred to the Charity by Social Workers, Health Workers, Schools, Churches — by people who know such children's needs and problems.

In 2008 the Blaby Club was awarded the RIBI Ordinary Rotarians Doing Extraordinary Things Award, in the category Working with Other Organisations., for its work with "Toys on the Table", and Terry was presented with this by RIBI President, Alan Jagger, at the RIBI Blackpool Conference. Like Warning Zone it can now stand on its own feet and survive.

PROST
aid®

Another Charity to have grown out of the efforts of Blaby Rotarians is "PROSTaid". Sadly Rtn. Robert Banner was diagnosed

with Prostate Cancer, and, as a result of his treatment, realised the difficulties and deficiencies in a Care programme under pressure. He created "Prostaid" with the assistance of other prostate cancer patients as a means of gaining much needed cash for the hard-pressed hospital services. This was firmly supported by the Club and one of his stalwart "Prostaid" members, Hugh Gunn, soon became a member of the Blaby Club. Two other Club members were unfortunately also suffering from the disease, and support for "Prostaid" became a priority for the Club. This has meant a host of activities over the years



including such events as Dragon Boat Racing on the River Soar. "Prostaid" has a very successful history including the funding of three special nurses for the Urology and Oncology Units at the Leicester Royal Infirmary and the Cynthia Spencer Hospice in Northampton. The Club are proud to have been part, through its members, of another Charity's growth from nothing to take an important role in local Leicestershire life.

Young people have always been a priority for the Blaby Club. Suitable young people have been sent on the

Rotary Youth Leadership Award at Grafham Water, a week long residential experience to develop their leadership potential. Equally young people with disability have been given the benefits of a week-long course in confidence-building through Outdoor activities in the Lake District organised by the Calvert Trust. The Club has supported a number of older youngsters including scouts and guides on trips and work camps to various parts of the world. Equally support was given to young Sam Mabey in 2009 to help his development as a table-tennis player. At the time he was UK No 2 in his age-range and obviously had ambitions to become a world or Olympic sportsman. The Club has supported Young Designer, Young Writer, Young Chef and Young Musician by sponsoring youngsters to enter all of these competitions.

Music has always been part of the scene for the Blaby Club and in 2013 the Leicester Grammar School offered us the possibility of a concert with its very talented musicians. This has been an important part of the programme and will continue to be so. The next scheduled Concert at the Grammar School will be in April 2016.

In March 2007 the Club were pleased to bring to Enderby and Countesthorpe the Société Musicale de Mennecey. Mennecey is a small town to the South East of Paris and is twinned with Countesthorpe and Renningen in Germany. The Conservatoire Municipal de Musique, de Danse et d'Art Dramatique de la Ville de Mennecey has a well-deserved reputation for excellence and quality of performance that goes far beyond the

limits of Mennecey and the region around it. La Société Musicale de Mennecey, established in 1867 is an orchestra of up to 60 musicians, comprised for the most part from pupils or former pupils of the Mennecey Conservatoire. The club was assisted in this venture by the Countesthorpe Twinning Association, and all the young members of the orchestra and their accompanying parents etc were accommodated with families within the area. An extraordinary weekend of fellowship and fun took place together with two outstanding concerts.

The club has always had an "Open-Door" policy to accommodating visitors especially those on Rotary business. Members have provided hosting and hospitality to Group Study Exchange Students and Friendship Exchange Rotarians on a number of occasions. Member Robert Banner was responsible for Friendship Exchanges for District 1070 for a period of four years and organised group exchanges with Cape Town, South Africa, Oregon USA, Washington State & Vancouver Island, and to New Zealand. Members John Croot and Barry Harpham went on at least one of these exchanges, which were of course open to all Rotarians in District 1070, whilst other members acted as hosts for the reciprocal visit, when the travelling Rotarians were unable to fulfil their reciprocity.

Bill and Barbara Southeran's son, James, spent a year-long Youth Exchange in California and the Club hosted Hank from the Californian family in return. Hank made a sparkling impression on Rotarians throughout the district during

his stay, but was a fraction problematical for his hosts. More recently one of the Club's successful past RYLA candidates, Jonathan Kingsley-Mills spent several months in Australia on what is now termed a New Generations Exchange, whilst Blaby hosted Australian Young journalist, Natalie Craig, who was temporarily attached to the Leicester Mercury.

The club have equally an active history on the environmental front. Apart from the tree planting at Cosby Golf club mentioned earlier, 200 trees were planted in Blaby Oaks, a 17 acre site next



to the recreation ground on Hospital Lane, Blaby, assisted by youngsters from Leics & Northants Army Cadet force. This wood is under the care of the Woodland Trust.

Trees were also donated as part of the National Forest and a special commemorative tree was planted in the grounds of Blaby District Council in

recognition of the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Bat boxes have been supplied and fitted to trees in Glen Parva.



When Rotary celebrated its Centenary in 2005 the Club placed an appropriate seat to commemorate this in the middle of Blaby. Equally earlier during the second Presidency of Robert Banner a specially constructed pathway for the Disabled was built from the rear of Snowdrop Close in Narborough to the disused railway line between Whetstone and Blaby, known as the Whistle Way, enabling disabled access right through to Blaby. Together with all this have been the regular Litter Picks taken on by Club Members in Blaby.



One of the largest efforts have been at "A Place to Grow" in Enderby. This was a project initially sponsored by Ron Miles during his Presidential Year, and later

taken up by Michael Wright in his Presidential Year. The Club have provided seats and a storage shed and assisted with the maintenance of the project, where children can have hands-on experience of gardening. Sadly the shed and other parts were damaged by vandalism, but support continues. The club have assisted the Enderby Allotment Holders who tend the adjacent plots by funding security



fencing for the site, which should benefit "A Place to Grow" as well. More support will continue to be given to this excellent project and members continue to give voluntary labour.

The club has also been active on the business front, hosting seminars in 1992 at the County Arms to demonstrate the opportunities in the new European Markets for small businesses. Contributors to the seminars were Russell Bott from the Leics Small Firms Centre, Denise Charfield from the DTI and Andy Scott from the CBI.

The club has organised visits to the Jaguar, Rover and Morgan Car plants on different occasions. A visit that has remained firm in the memories of those



who participated was to the flight simulator at Castle Donington when members were able to take the controls and attempt to land at different international airports — quite extraordinary.

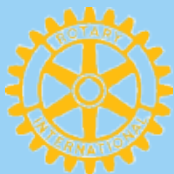
The Rotary Club of Blaby presents this short history of the First Forty Years in the sure and certain knowledge that someone will come up with something that has been overlooked and will be asking the question "Why was that left out?"

To that unknown "someone", and indeed to all, we can only apologise for any omission in this brief story. It is, however, a story without an end and perhaps any such omission can be included in a later version to commemorate 50 years of the Blaby Club.

Our thanks are sincerely recorded to all those who have contributed to the completion of this brief story, and we hope it will bring just a little satisfaction on looking back on things achieved.

As the Blaby Club now celebrates its first forty years it can look back on achievements and a positive influence on the communities it serves. It is in a position of change and rebuilding. The age profile of the Club has become high. However two new members were recruited last year and two more are awaiting investiture this year with others in the pipeline. They will be joining a Club with a history of achievement, a Club that has punched above its weight, but a Club that cares. The next new members will be joining a Club that, in the words of RI President for 2015-16, K.R. Ravindran, is "A gift to the world", a Club that gives of its talents, its knowledge, its dedication, its efforts to endeavour to make a difference to others who may be in need.

History inevitably looks back, but it does so in order the better to look forward. May the Blaby Club continue to look forward and continue —
TO CARE.



The First Forty Presidents



1976-77	John Courtney	1996-97	David Robinson
1977-78	* Alan Pearce	1997-98	* Robert Banner
1978-79	* Andrew St John	1998-99	* Mike Hill
1979-80	Reg Nowell	1999-2000	* Alan Pulford
1980-81	* Harold Hall	2000-01	* Howard King
1981-82	* Roy Brown	2001-02	* Robert Banner
1982-83	Peter Halford	2002-03	* Bill Southeran
1983-84	* Henry Archer	2003-04	* Eddy Brew
1984-85	* Bill Southeran	2004-05	* Terry Watts
1985-86	* David Ripley	2005-06	Gough Gamble
1986-87	Peter Stanley	2006-07	Roy Cafferty
1987-88	Jack Andrews	2007-08	Barry Harpham
1988-89	* Mick Beesley	2008-09	Elsbeth James
1989-90	* Terry Watts	2009-10	Brian Armstrong
1990-91	* Bill James	2010-11	* Hugh Gunn
1991-92	* David Clarke	2011-12	Michael Wright
1992-93	* Ron Miles	2012-13	Hilary Painter
1993-94	Alex Hunter	2013-14	* Andrew St John
1994-95	* John Croot	2014-15	* Eddy Brew
1995-96	* Gerald Rimmington	2015-16	* Terry Watts

* Denotes Paul Harris Fellow